THURSDAY, MARCH 10, 1892.

THE SCIENCE MUSEUM AND THE TATE GALLERY.

THE men of science of this country owe a deep debt of gratitude to Mr. Goschen. As a result of his careful inquiry into the questions raised by the suggested use, for Mr. Tate's gallery, of land bought for scientific purposes, he has decided that the scientific claim must hold good. It is impossible to over-estimate the importance of this decision. Had it been otherwise, the possibility of establishing in London an institution which should be for Science what the National Gallery is for Art and the British Museum Library for Literature would have been wrecked for a generation.

One can easily imagine that it was not easy for a Chancellor of the Exchequer to come to such a conclusion—not easy, that is, to one who was prepared only to look at the surface of things.

On the one hand, there was the tempting offer of £80,000 from a well-known public benefactor, about which large sum so much has been said that very few have thought it worth while to consider either the value of the plot or what capital sum would represent the annual outlay necessary to keep up the gallery when once built; an outlay which, of course, would fall upon the nation.

On the other hand, the Lord President of the Council, who is responsible for the Science and Art Department (and, as many people think, however erroneously, for the proper setting out and consideration of any national question touching Science or Art), seemed to be willing that Mr. Tate should have his way. Nor was this all; the Report of the Committee appointed by the Treasury a few years ago is so vaguely drafted that it now appears that the view which we and others took in discussing its recommendations at the time was incorrect. The question referred to this Committee dealt with the space necessary for the housing of the science collections which had been brought together as a nucleus for the Science Museum, the establishment of which was recommended in 1874 by the Duke of Devonshire's Commission. The Committee's Report recommended that 90,000 square feet *should be provided*. We and others naturally took this to mean that this was in addition to the existing space. The modern gloss, however, is that this represented the whole space necessary, in the opinion of the Committee, for a complete Museum dealing with all the inorganic sciences (except geology and mineralogy) and their industrial applications! It may even be that this idea has been placed before Mr. Goschen. If so, all the greater credit to him for having seen through the fallacy of a view which it is absolutely impossible can ever have been in the heads of the scientific members of the Committee.

As we pointed out recently, it is better not to deal with opinions in such a matter as this, if facts are available; they exist. The space considered necessary not very many years ago for the sciences represented in the Natural History Museum was 150,000 square feet, nearly double that already mentioned. In the case of these sciences, moreover, "industrial applications" cannot be exhibited at all—except, by the way, in the case of geology, for which a special Museum exists in Jermyn Street.

One hundred and fifty thousand square feet being required, a plot of 500,000 square feet was provided; and it is quite certain that, at some not very distant time, the space not yet built on will be required. We cannot, therefore, call this generous appropriation unwise from the point of view of possible, or rather certain, future extensions; while all will agree that a national building of this class is all the better for standing a little away from noisy and dusty roads.

This, then, is the available fact with which we can deal, and we must again state whither it leads us; for in Mr. Goschen's letter to Mr. Tate, admirable though it is as a complete statement of the case, there is one phrase to which we must take exception. To show its force, we quote the whole sentence:—

> "In conclusion, allow me to say that I can well understand that the difficulties in finding a suitable home for your collection, notwithstanding your munificent offer to build yourself, may not unnaturally have caused you some vexation. I think you will, however, admit that the Government have shown their desire to meet you in every possible way, and are willing to incur considerable outlay themselves in carrying out your plan. In the first instance, we not only offered the eastern and western galleries for housing British art, but adopted the plan of uniting them by a cross gallery, which seemed to remove many of the objections. When you came to the conclusion that the proportions given to the plan were not large enough or distinct enough to suit your views, and when you suggested the site at the corner of the Imperial Institute Road, I hoped that a solution had been found, and that this arrangement would meet with general acceptance. You are aware of the storm which followed, *and though, in my own judgment, the Government land at Kensington was of so large an area that, by some understanding between the representatives of science and those of art, satisfactory means could be provided for assigning sites for every purpose*, I was nevertheless so anxious that no obstacles should prevent the execution of your plans, that I consented to recommend the Government to incur a very considerable pecuniary liability if the Corporation of London should, on their part, offer the site on the Embankment on terms which were suggested to me as not impossible."

Now, the land at Kensington, of "so large an area," consists of something like 300,000 square feet, say three-fifths of the site occupied by the Natural History Museum: of this, Mr. Tate demanded roughly 100,000 square feet—thus leaving 200,000.

Of this, the new laboratories for physics, astronomical physics, and chemistry, if these are to be on the scale of similar institutions in a second-rate German town, will, including the necessary lighting spaces, &c., require 100,000 square feet. This leaves 100,000.

But this remainder, on which there is to be built a Science Museum, *is less than two-thirds of the exhibiting space of the Natural History Museum* as it stands at present, to say nothing of the total area devoted to it!

It is clear, then, that Mr. Goschen has not had the facts placed before him by those upon whom he has relied for his information. While the official prompting has tended one way, the opinions of the President and Officers of the Royal Society and other men of science have clearly tended another; and Mr. Goschen's final

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attitude is, to a large extent, due to the weight which he has wisely and bravely attached to the latter.

> "The proposal," he says, "has not met with the general acceptance which we anticipated for it. On the contrary, it is strenuously opposed by what appears to be the whole body of opinion representing scientific interests; and, although it might be possible to provide adequately for those interests and at the same time appropriate the site proposed to the British Art Gallery, I cannot say that the discussions in that sense with which we have for some time been occupied have so far had any effect in diminishing opposition from those quarters."

The opposition has, we may remark, not changed because the facts have not changed, and we do not think it would have been started if any *modus vivendi* had been possible.

And here we approach a side of the question which shows that as the world grows older, questions of science and art are not managed in this country any better than they used to be, and that some radical change is necessary in our manner of dealing with them. A correspondent of the *Pall Mall Gazette* ascribes this to *Tory government*. It is easy to see that the administrative system and not party government is to blame.

Mr. Goschen, in his letter, states that Mr. Tate himself suggested the site on the science ground, and it may be that some friends of science have said or thought hard things of Mr. Tate in consequence.

Mr. Tate replies:—

> "I did not suggest the site at the corner of the Imperial Institute Road, and was only aware of it when it was pointed out to me as the plot offered by the Government as a desirable site for the Gallery of British Art, and with that site I expressed myself satisfied."

It must therefore be taken that it was the Government itself that offered the site. Did the Government offer first and consider afterwards? for Mr. Goschen now admits that it "would not be wise to assign this corner site to the Gallery of British Art." Another point can be best stated by again quoting from Mr. Goschen:—

> "When it [the scheme] was first mooted, the intention was that works of British painters from the National and South Kensington Galleries should be transferred to the new gallery. It has since been ascertained that the trustees of the National Gallery are not disposed to fall in with this intention, and that the Science and Art Department is precluded by the terms of its various trusts from parting with many of its most important works."

The Science and Art Department is not more "precluded" now than it was when the land was offered to Mr. Tate. The preclusion dates from 1857, and it apparently was not known to those who, as it would now seem, without consulting the Science and Art Department, were ready both to hand over pictures and land.

We give these two instances as indications of the result of the present system of dealing administratively with such questions.

We have already stated that the scientific world is under great obligations to Mr. Goschen; but we must also point out that the President and Officers of the Royal Society, and the other men of science who memorialized Lord Salisbury and attended the deputation, have rendered a service to science worthy of the high position they hold.

There are men of science employed at South Kensington, it is true; but they, as we have said before, have no official voice in such matters as these.

Since it seems we may now hope that the land has been saved for scientific purposes, it is much to be desired that some representative of science in the House of Commons should move for a Committee on which the Treasury and the Office of Works, the Science and Art Department (though judging from recent events the last-named is too frequently ignored when questions directly connected with its duties are under consideration), together with the Royal Society and the Professors of the Royal College of Science, may be represented.

Mr. Goschen's answer on Monday to Dr. Farquharson's question as to what steps had been taken to provide for the building of the Science Museum, and for the extension of the Royal College of Science so urgently required, shows us clearly that it will be some time before the teaching at South Kensington will have passed through its present camping-out stage.

Mr. Goschen acknowledges that

> "it has been impossible to take any steps towards beginning the erection of a Science Museum or the extension of the Royal College of Science until the question connected with the British Art Gallery had been settled. I myself had visions of a scheme, independently of building on the controversial corner, which I had thought might have given ample satisfaction both for the present and future to the scientific world, but the matter will now have to be reconsidered."

In answer to another question Mr. Goschen admitted that the scientific work at South Kensington is at present cramped, and stated that, in conjunction with the Commissioner of Works, he would endeavour to find some temporary buildings to meet the difficulty before the final scheme is adopted.

Let us hope that, some time before another generation has passed away, the "administration" which has led to the present *impasse* may be ameliorated, and that useful buildings on the site may prove to everybody the justice of the views held by the men of science in this matter.

THE CORRESPONDENCE OF CHRISTIAN HUYGENS.

Œuvres Complètes de Christiaan Huygens. Publiées par la Société Hollandaise des Sciences. Tome quatrième, Correspondance 1662-63. (La Haye: Martinus Nijhoff, 1891.)

THE fourth volume of the Huygens correspondence, covering the years 1662-63, is now before us. Although the interval, as regards fresh discoveries by the "Dutch Archimedes," was a comparatively barren one, the 249 letters referable to it (to say nothing of supplementary documents) afford materials for much instruction, and some entertainment. It is much to learn that the greatest astronomer of his time sought to keep in touch with Paris in respect to the cut and colour of his clothes; nor can we be indifferent as to the precise date of his beginning to wear a wig. On June 15, 1662, at the age of thirty-four, he communicated to his brother Constantine the distressing intelligence of his incipient baldness; a remedy for which, in the shape of the best *perruque* to be had in Paris, was provided in the following

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